UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

TIMOTHY SUAVE WILLIAMS,

Petitioner,

Case Number: 2:14-CV-13849
HONORABLE GERALD E. ROSEN

v.

STEVEN RIVARD,

Respondent.
_____/

OPINION AND ORDER DISMISSING PETITION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS AND DENYING CERTIFICATE OF APPEALABILITY

This is a habeas case filed under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petitioner Timothy Suave Williams (Petitioner) is a state inmate currently incarcerated at the St. Louis Correctional Facility in St. Louis, Michigan. He challenges his convictions for three counts of armed robbery. The claim raised does not warrant habeas corpus relief. Therefore, the petition will be dismissed.

I.

Petitioner pleaded guilty in Oakland County Circuit Court to three counts of armed robbery. On January 7, 2013, he was sentenced to 11 to 40 years' in prison for each conviction, to be served concurrently.

Petitioner filed an application for leave to appeal in the Michigan Court of Appeals, challenging the scoring of offense variable 13. The Michigan Court of Appeals denied leave to appeal. *People v. Williams*, No. 318540 (Mich. Ct. App. Jan. 9, 2014). Petitioner filed

an application for leave to appeal in the Michigan Supreme Court, which was denied. *People v. Williams*, 495 Mich. 1009 (Mich. May 27, 2014).

Petitioner then filed the pending habeas petition. He raises the same claim raised in state court.

II.

A.

Upon the filing of a habeas corpus petition, the Court must promptly examine the petition to determine "if it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief." Rule 4, Rules Governing Section 2254 cases. If the Court determines that the petitioner is not entitled to relief, the Court shall summarily dismiss the petition. *McFarland v. Scott*, 512 U.S. 849, 856 (1994) ("Federal courts are authorized to dismiss summarily any habeas petition that appears legally insufficient on its face"). The habeas petition does not raise a claim which may establish the violation of a federal constitutional right, therefore, the petition will be dismissed.

B.

28 U.S.C. § 2254(d) provides:

> An application for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court shall not be granted with respect to any claim that was adjudicated on the merits in State court proceedings unless the adjudication of the claim –
>
> (1) resulted in a decision that was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; or

> (2) resulted in a decision that was based on an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented in the State court proceedings.

28 U.S.C. § 2254(d).

"A state court's decision is 'contrary to' . . . clearly established law if it 'applies a rule that contradicts the governing law set forth in [Supreme Court cases]' or if it 'confronts a set of facts that are materially indistinguishable from a decision of [the Supreme] Court and nevertheless arrives at a result different from [this] precedent.'" *Mitchell v. Esparza*, 540 U.S. 12, 15-16 (2003) (per curiam), *quoting Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362, 405-06 (2000)). "[T]he 'unreasonable application' prong of the statute permits a federal habeas court to 'grant the writ if the state court identifies the correct governing legal principle from [the Supreme] Court but unreasonably applies that principle to the facts' of petitioner's case." *Wiggins v. Smith*, 539 U.S. 510, 520 (2003) (quoting *Williams*, 529 U.S. at 413). "Section 2254(d) reflects the view that habeas corpus is a guard against extreme malfunctions in the state criminal justice systems, not a substitute for ordinary error correction through appeal. . . . As a condition for obtaining habeas corpus from a federal court, a state prisoner must show that the state court's ruling on the claim being presented in federal court was so lacking in justification that there was an error well understood and comprehended in existing law beyond any possibility for fairminded disagreement." *Id.* at 786-87 (internal quotation omitted).

Section 2254(d)(1) limits a federal habeas court's review to a determination of whether the state court's decision comports with clearly established federal law as

determined by the Supreme Court at the time the state court renders its decision. *See Williams*, 529 U.S. at 412. Section 2254(d) "does not require citation of [Supreme Court] cases – indeed, it does not even require *awareness* of [Supreme Court] cases, so long as neither the reasoning nor the result of the state-court decision contradicts them." *Early v. Packer*, 537 U.S. 3, 8 (2002). "[W]hile the principles of "clearly established law" are to be determined solely by resort to Supreme Court rulings, the decisions of lower federal courts may be instructive in assessing the reasonableness of a state court's resolution of an issue." *Stewart v. Erwin*, 503 F.3d 488, 493 (6th Cir. 2007), *citing Williams v. Bowersox*, 340 F.3d 667, 671 (8th Cir. 2003); *Dickens v. Jones*, 203 F. Supp. 2d 354, 359 (E.D. Mich. 2002).

Lastly, a federal habeas court must presume the correctness of state court factual determinations. See 28 U.S.C. § 2254(e)(1). A petitioner may rebut this presumption only with clear and convincing evidence. *Warren v. Smith*, 161 F.3d 358, 360-61 (6th Cir. 1998).

III.

Petitioner seeks habeas relief on the ground that offense variable 13 was improperly scored at 25 points for a pattern of criminal activity arising from one incident.

"'[F]ederal habeas corpus relief does not lie for errors of state law.'" *Estelle v. McGuire*, 502 U.S. 62, 67 (1991), *quoting Lewis v. Jeffers*, 497 U.S. 764, 780 (1990)). Petitioner's argument that the state court erred in scoring his sentencing guidelines is based solely on the state court's interpretation of state law. It does not implicate any federal rights. *See Bradshaw v. Richey*, 546 U.S. 74, 76 (2005) ("[A] state court's interpretation of state law, including one announced on direct appeal of the challenged conviction, binds a federal

court sitting on habeas review."); *Mullaney v. Wilbur*, 421 U.S. 684, 691 (1975) ("[S]tate courts are the ultimate expositors of state law."). A claim that offense variables were improperly scored under state law is not cognizable on habeas corpus review. *See Coleman v. Curtin*, 425 F. App'x 483, 484-85 (6th Cir. 2011). Therefore, habeas corpus relief is not available

IV.

Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 22 provides that an appeal may not proceed unless a certificate of appealability (COA) is issued under 28 U.S.C. § 2253. Rule 11 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Proceedings now requires that the Court "must issue or deny a certificate of appealability when it enters a final order adverse to the applicant."

A COA may be issued "only if the applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. §2253(c)(2). A petitioner must show "that reasonable jurists could debate whether (or, for that matter, agree that) the petition should have been resolved in a different manner or that the issues presented were adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further." *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000) (citation omitted). In this case, the Court concludes that reasonable jurists would not debate the conclusion that the petition fails to state a claim upon which habeas corpus relief should be granted. Therefore, the Court will deny a certificate of appealability. The Court will also deny petitioner leave to appeal *in forma pauperis*, because the appeal would be frivolous. *See Allen v. Stovall*, 156 F. Supp. 2d 791, 798 (E.D. Mich. 2001).

V.

For the foregoing reasons, IT IS ORDERED that the petition for a writ of habeas corpus is DENIED.

It is further ORDERED that a certificate of appealability is DENIED.

It is further ORDERED that leave to appeal *in forma pauperis* is DENIED.

s/Gerald E. Rosen
Chief Judge, United States District Court

Dated: October 29, 2014

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing document was served upon the parties and/or counsel of record on October 29, 2014, by electronic and/or ordinary mail.

s/Julie Owens
Case Manager, (313) 234-5135